

Warlord 301

Chapter 301 Don't underestimate me

"Won't they come outside?" Dilan asked himself quietly as he was waiting for the three women to leave the base.

He had expected that they would want to fight each other because they were annoyed and frustrated. Yet, from the looks of it, Dilan's expectations were too high because nothing like that had happened.

The women calmly left the base after a few minutes. They ended up in the middle of Shiron's main street and many Ascenders and Survivors followed them.

Everyone wanted to see their battle but Dilan felt that something was odd.

'They don't seem angry anymore...am I just imagining things?' He wondered while keeping his eyes on the three women.

Kathrine and Yvonne were on one side while Victoria was standing on the other side, calmly resting her hands on her waist. She winked at Dilan once as if she was attempting to seduce him.

But Dilan felt weird and he squinted his eyes at her.

'Did you plan something, Victoria?' He wondered and told himself to be more careful.

Two huge corpses of Silver Tier-1 Minotaurs appeared next to Yvonne all of a sudden. They slammed on the ground and started to move not long after. Greenish flames filled their eyes and a dark semi-transparent membrane appeared on their skeletal body.

Black-feathered wings spread out from Yvonne's back and her eyes turned almost pitch-black, creating an eerie and gloomy feeling that was subconsciously released from her body. Through this, it was almost as if Yvonne had become the Grim Reaper herself.

While Yvonne instilled a deep fear in the hearts of everyone around her, Kathrine's entire body was shrouded in an armor of flashes of lightning that engulfed her body tightly. A longsword rested in her hands and several pieces of equipment manifested out of nowhere. They clung to her body as if she pulled them toward her like a magnet.

Pure power radiated from Kathrine and all the spectators involuntarily stepped back when bolts of lightning lashed out uncontrollably.

Kathrine's surrounding was being destroyed but oddly enough not a single bolt of lightning hit Yvonne or the two Silver Tier-1 Minotaurs that she controlled.

"Great control," Dilan could only mumble with a faint smile on his lips, which caused many Ascenders to look at him in confusion.

"Kathrine is doing this intentionally, isn't she?" Sven asked when he appeared next to Dilan.

"Yeah, it looks like she wants to trick Victoria into believing that she cannot control her power well," Dilan muttered in response before shaking his head when he looked over to Victoria.

'But that won't work,' He thought in the second he saw Victoria's excited expressions.

Her entire body was shrouded in a reddish hue, her fangs and claws had fully grown and Victoria's eyes were glowing in a bright crimson color.

She didn't need to wield a weapon because her entire body had transformed into a weapon itself. Thus, she released her entire strength through her legs to blast forward.

Within a moment, Victoria accelerated to a speed not many Ascenders were able to follow with their eyes. Their bodies wouldn't be able to react in time even if they could follow her path as Victoria dashed straight ahead.

Yvonne was extremely calm. She raised a wooden staff that had a black crystal embedded on the top and manifested something out of the darkness. Needles of various sizes appeared in front of Yvonne, which she shot out without a sign of hesitation.

Simultaneously the two Silver Tier-1 Minotaurs began to move. They blocked Victoria's path and her sight of the Sisters, which made it impossible for her to realize that Kathrine had already disappeared.

Only a few bolts of lightning that were shot out from Kathrine's previous direction were left behind. A purple flash blasted toward Victoria from the side.

It was Kathrine, whose speed had increased by more than 50%. Her Agility also reached close to 75 Units after being amplified by 50%. It allowed her to reach the stats a Peak Tier-1 existence could reach.

Kathrine thrust her longsword straight at Victoria without showing signs of hesitation. Victoria's eyes widened a bit in response but a confident smile appeared on her lips just a moment later.

She looked at the strategy of the sisters with a faint smile and thought that normal Vampires would have already died by now. They wouldn't even be able to properly handle blocking several bolts of lightning, needles manifested out of darkness, let alone two Undead Tier-1 Minotaurs.

"You're even faster than me, not bad...little girl," Victoria said with a smug expression as spikes of Blood-Ice shot out of the ground. They enlarged and shot straight toward Kathrine, whose expression soured visibly.

"The senses of a Vampire are a lot better than the senses of a human. That also means I have better reflexes, sweetheart," Victoria chimed in, changing the way she called Kathrine every now and then.

With the use of her Blood-Ice, Victoria destroyed the needles manifested out of darkness, the bolts of lightning and she forcefully halted Kathrine's approach.

Only the Minotaurs were a bit annoying to handle because both were wielding two maces, one in each hand. Their destructive power was much higher than that of Kathrine's, which was how they easily destroyed the Blood-Ice spikes that pierced their legs.

Victoria frowned when she noticed that the Minotaurs were not even restricted by her Blood-Ice. Her expression only transformed to a smile when she returned to move once again.

Yvonne and Kathrine were not the only ones with Occupation, occupational abilities, and normal abilities. Victoria had them as well and she had yet to use them in front of anyone present.

The blood hue around her enlarged all of a sudden. It spread out several meters until it stopped moving. At that moment a suctioning force originated from within Victoria's body. She sucked in the blood hue in an instant and initiated various changes of her body.

Her claws enlarged and a red gleam appeared on her fangs. Her skin turned a bit reddish and all of her veins were clearly visible. For a moment everyone present began to wonder whether Victoria was truly a Vampire or a monster trying to act like one.

Victoria took only a single step but the concrete below her burst open. A small crater emerged around her as Victoria's power kept increasing. She had accumulated enough blood energy to nourish the blood hue. After he activated her stat-amplifying occupational ability, her appearance changed a bit.

However, that was not something Dilan was bothered about as he looked at the situation carefully. His eyes glowed brightly and his entire body was itching to join the fight. He wanted to fight Victoria, especially after he figured that she could amplify her strength by so much.

There was probably a reason why she didn't use it in the fight against the Thunderbolt Eagle but Dilan didn't actually care about that. He released his battle lust, which was inevitably noticed by everyone.

Those who were around Dilan and could still move backed off slowly while pulling everyone else with them. The moment Dilan felt like fighting, there was no way that anyone could stop him.

"Darling~ aren't you a bit early here? We wanted to entertain you a bit before..." Victoria suddenly said when her body disappeared before she finished her sentence.

Kathrine had also disappeared from everyone's sight and when the others looked over to Yvonne's earlier position, the spectators realized that she had also disappeared.

"You may continue to entertain me, just give it your all!" Dilan could only shout as he released his entire strength. A thunderous sound emerged from within Dilan and he pushed his feet off the ground.

However, instead of blasting forward to attack Victoria, whom he could clearly detect to his left, Dilan's gaze flicked upward.

"How is the air up there, Yvonne?" Dilan asked with a cheeky smile as he catapulted himself into the air.

The ground below him cracked open and a crater with a radius of two meters appeared in the ground the moment Dilan caused a shockwave.

Dilan appeared next to Yvonne in the air an instant later with a faint smile on his lips.

"Astonished? Well, that's how it is," Dilan chuckled while his sky blue eyes stared deep in Yvonne's black eyes.

She was shocked that Dilan had suddenly appeared in the air next to her. However, Yvonne could keep her calm when she realized that Dilan was still ten meters away from her.

Gravity was on her side and Dilan would fall to the ground at any moment.

"By now, you should know that underestimating me is a big mistake," Dilan said all of a sudden and Yvonne's eyes widened as she realized what was in store for her.

Chapter 302 Aerial battle

"By now, you should know that underestimating me is a big mistake," Dilan said in an eerily calm voice as if he was just about to teach Yvonne a small but impactful lesson.

However, this small lesson was a bit different than expected because the Blazing Serpentine Blade manifested in Dilan's hand the moment he finished speaking.

With a quick, yet, smooth movement, Dilan's hand that was holding the Blazing Serpentine Blade snapped into two. The Blazing Serpentine Blade shot out and enlarged at once.

As long as all blades of the Blazing Serpentine Blade were enlarged, Dilan's weapon could reach a length of 20 meters easily. Dilan made use of this to coil it around Yvonne's waist and the black-feathered wings on her back.

Utilizing enough force the moment the blade was coiled around Yvonne, Dilan pulled himself straight toward her. He appeared right in front of Yvonne, who had issues controlling her wings properly.

Dilan had restricted them to issue follow-up attacks. He made use of his extremely high Agility stat that exceeded Yvonne's by far to push his body away from hers just a moment after he landed on her.

His push catapulted Dilan straight into the air. He turned around with a bright smile on his face that caused Yvonne to feel as if chills were running down her spine. Yvonne manifested a total of 10 darkness needles instinctively.

They blasted straight at Dilan, who was supposed to evade them by letting go of the Blazing Serpentine Blade's handle.

However, Dilan merely smiled as he manifested [Aegis" Shield] in its strongest form. The Ilran Chestplate amplified the effect of protection-based abilities as well. A blue shield manifested in front of Dilan, thereby blocking all the attacks.

When Dilan knew that he wouldn't be affected by the needles manifested out of darkness, he pulled on the Blazing Serpentine Blade. Gravitation was already working its wonders by pulling Dilan to the ground, but that was not enough for him.

Dilan wanted more which was why he made use of the Blazing Serpentine Blade to accelerate his falling speed with the use of brute force. He was still straight above Yvonne, who was staring at Dilan's action with widened eyes.

If she had been eerily calm before, now her heart was beating rapidly. The sun shone brightly above them, lighting up their surroundings. Yvonne was forced to look straight at Dilan, who seemed to emerge straight out of the sun as he blasted downward...straight onto her.

Like a cannonball, Dilan was flung into the air and he collided hard against Yvonne's body. Her breath was taken away and her eyes widened when she was blasted to the ground while being restricted by Dilan's iron-tight grasp and the Blazing Serpentine Blade.

From the outside, it almost looked like a meteorite was about to smash into the street, which caused everyone to exclaim in shock. Kathrine's eyes widened and even Victoria couldn't help herself as she halted in her tracks.

"He won't kill her, right?" Victoria thought as goosebumps sprang up all over her body.

"Was that too much?" Dilan thought all of a sudden when he realized that his excitement to fight the three women might have been a little bit over the top. For a moment, Dilan had forgotten that Yvonne was not a Vampire like Victoria!

It was obvious that he would survive smashing into the concrete because his health stat was extremely high. He had the Origin ability [Regeneration] as well, so nothing would happen to him. But now that he noticed how fast they had smashed into the ground, Dilan couldn't help but wonder if Yvonne would be fine.

He frowned deeply and began to curse inwardly after which Dilan reminded himself that this was just a friendly spar, one he was never supposed to join, to begin with.

After realization struck him, Dilan didn't hesitate anymore. He hugged Yvonne tightly while twisting his body. She didn't even realize what had happened as her head was pressed in his chest.

Dilan's wildly beating heart was everything Yvonne could hear before they collided on the ground. His breath was taken away and he spits out blood as they broke through the concrete on the ground.

A huge shockwave swept through the street, flinging loose concrete and rubble through the surroundings when Dilan and Yvonne's impact created a two-meter-deep crater.

Some Survivors were pushed backward by the shockwave while most were pushed towards the ground. Everyone's legs grew weak at the thought of impacting on the concrete just like it had happened with Yvonne.

Nobody believed that Yvonne had survived the attack including Kathrine, whose eyes widened in terror.

"Yvonne!!!" She screamed and her eyes already got teary as she disappeared from her spot. Kathrine appeared above the crater, only to freeze in her place.

Dilan was lying in the crater, and groaning as he was trying to get up from the ground.

One of his arms was still wrapped around Yvonne, who was perfectly fine. Her eyes were still filled with shock but she was unscathed and trying to wrestle herself out of both Dilan's embrace and the restrictions of the Blazing Serpentine Blade.

"She is definitely not dead," Victoria remarked when she looked at the situation in the crater. Despite seeing that Yvonne was lying in Dilan's arm, she didn't feel jealous. Oddly enough, Victoria felt like smiling as she added,

"Why is your sister so cute?"

Victoria's question stupefied Kathrine for a moment. Kathrine was still wiping the tears of shock of possibly losing her sister and she didn't understand what Victoria meant.

Only when Kathrine observed Yvonne's behavior did realization dawn upon her.

"Since when can she act so cute?!" Kathrine blurted out and felt stupefied, causing Victoria's smile to widen even further. The expression on Kathrine's face was genuine and one could tell that she was truly astonished by this fact.

"You're also cute, little girl, don't worry!" Victoria teased lightly before she started to chuckle. Victoria's occupational ability was terminated and a sudden weakness overcame her. Her legs began to shiver and it became difficult for her to stay on her feet.

A rosy blush crept up Kathrine's face when Victoria began to tease her. She was annoyed at Victoria's entire existence at first, however, after speaking to her for a few minutes before they started their battle, Kathrine realized that the Vampire might not be that bad.

"How was I supposed to know that the emotions of Vampires are several times higher than that of humans...?!" Kathrine could only think when she decided to support Victoria by lending her one of her arms to lean on.

Kathrine wanted to bring Victoria back to the base. She didn't feel like continuing to look at Yvonne because she felt that it might harm her mentally.

It was never good to be jealous of her own sister, especially not when it came to boys. Nonetheless, Kathrine had a premonition because the big picture was slowly forming in her mind.

"Yvonne is not interested in him...right...?" Kathrine mumbled in distress, and Victoria, who had heard everything, could only start laughing once again. Kathrine glared at her but Victoria was not bothered by this.

"Just share him with Yvonne and me~" Victoria whispered seductively as her head reached forward, her lips lightly brushing Kathrine's ear.

Kathrine flinched at that moment and she nearly let go of Victoria.

"You are really good at what you are doing...but you know that, don't you?" Kathrine asked with a frown on her face. However, Victoria just smiled knowingly as she appeared to be both joking and serious at the same time.

"Just think about it. By now, you should realize that Dilan can have anyone he wants to. In our society polygamy is nothing rare. Whether it's men or women, as long as they're strong enough, they can have whoever they want!"

Kathrine felt uneasy at the thought of sharing Dilan with others, even if it was her sister.

"Sharing Dilan?! What a big joke...he is...mine! This nutcase is insane!!!"

Chapter 303 Spreading Love

Dilan got up from the ground with Yvonne in his arms. He removed his arms and the Blazing Serpentine Blade from around her just a moment later when his head moved in the direction where Victoria and Kathrine had been standing.

"So the fight is over? That's sad..." Dilan voiced his disappointment but he couldn't really change the situation so he just accepted it.

“W-Why did you do that?” Yvonne asked him all of a sudden. She could barely hear anything in her surroundings because her heart was beating so loudly. It was a weird feeling and something she had never experienced, which confused her.

Yvonne was an adult, but a large part of the 18 years she had lived had been spent battling an illness. Thus, it was not like she had ever grown feelings for someone or had close contact with a man other than her father.

And even her contact with her father was completely different than it was the case with Dilan which was why Yvonne blushed and she felt unsure of what to do next.

“What do you mean ‘why’? Isn’t it obvious...it was not necessary for you to get injured just because I went a little overboard? But I have to say that I’m a little bit sad that the fight already ended. Your sister and Victoria didn’t seem to be pleased with what they saw in the crater our fall created.

Dilan was not stupid and he could make sense of something just by looking at it. Yvonne paled when she thought about her sister and her expression distorted a bit as various intrusive thoughts entered her mind.

“You should have attacked me with all your might instead of bothering about my injuries. Now Kathrine will hate me...” Yvonne suddenly blurted out, feeling distressed.

“Kathrine will hate you? That’s a stupid thought,” Dilan said, lifting his hand to lightly tap her head with his flat hand. Yvonne looked at Dilan in confusion, while he merely smiled at her. Her expression eased upon seeing Dilan’s smile and she began to smile in return as well.

“Furthermore, even if you girls planned to attack me from the beginning, it’s not like I can allow you to get injured, not in times when everyone is required to be at their peak,” Dilan added, feeling great at the thought of the various Vampire clans that were likely to come over before he continued, “...well except Victoria...she will heal, either way,”

After Dilan said this, he walked out of the crater with Yvonne by his side. The spectators were still present but everyone looked at them in confusion.

Dilan was the one, who seemed injured while Yvonne’s only rather abnormal condition was that she was blushing and smiling instead of sulking.

When Dilan saw that the two other women had returned to the others, Dilan noticed something that attracted his interest.

“A common enemy led to a bond of friendship, is that it?” He mumbled all of a sudden when he saw that Kathrine was talking to Victoria without a grimace. Even Kathrine looked quite calm and at ease.

That was, at least, the case until she saw that Dilan returned with a blushing and faintly smiling face.

“I told you that your sister is cute...a cute type of a femme fatale!” Victoria squealed in delight as a crazed smile appeared on her face. Her head was resting in her two hands as she licked her lips seductively.

“I want to squish her cheeks~” She blurted out when her crimson eyes began to glow even brighter than before. Victoria disappeared for a moment just to reappear right behind Yvonne.

Yvonne flinched the moment she sensed that someone had appeared behind her but even before she could react, Victoria's head was resting on Yvonne's shoulder while her arms hugged the young woman from behind.

Victoria's ample breasts pressed against Yvonne's back and her flowery scent spread through the surrounding. Yvonne was unable to move for several seconds until she noticed what was going on.

Victoria squeezed her right cheek while hugging her tightly with her other arm.

"Looks like someone has lots of love to spread," Dilan chuckled while looking at the situation that unfolded next to him.

When Victoria heard this, she lifted her head to look at Dilan for a moment before she smiled brightly.

"If you want, I can shower all my love on you~," Victoria said without shying away, but Dilan could only laugh lightly in response.

"Try to say that to me while your eyes are marine blue and I might take it seriously," He said while he continued to chuckle. He ruffled her hair for a second before returning to the others.

His expression turned serious all of a sudden and he looked at Sven and the others as he made an announcement.

"Fighting Vampires is not easy if our stats are on par with theirs. That's why I want us to improve our stats, our equipment and the abilities we can use to obliterate them without any casualties. It doesn't matter if our base were to be destroyed or if we would have to move after the entire city would reduce to rubble. As long as nobody dies, everything is fine.

That being said, I brought a few things back from the Blue Star camp!"

Dilan spoke slowly but loudly enough for everyone to hear him. Two ancient-looking parchments and one ability crystal appeared in his hand.

One parchment was for Sarah, another one for Old Jeff and the ability crystal was given to Yvonne, who was still occupied with trying to get rid of Victoria.

However, that was harder than Yvonne expected. The young woman looked at her older sister pleadingly but Kathrine responded with a helpless shrug.

"It's better for you to be her victim than me," She said with a sly smile on her face; a smile that caused Yvonne to start pouting.

"This..." Sarah suddenly exclaimed, just to turn quiet once again. She read through the parchment several times and her expression changed every now and then. This was quite funny to look at but Dilan was not interested in that.

"I was not sure if we have all of the required ingredients to create the 'Ordinary Healing reagent' but I know that we have a few Gates with one or two ingredients we require for that potion. It shouldn't be a problem to find the remaining ingredients...I guess," Dilan stated, not feeling fully confident that they could find all the ingredients.

He didn't know how rare they were because his knowledge about plants was not exactly vast.

"We have all herbs, which are required to create the 'Ordinary Healing reagent. I will take your leave and go to work immediately!" Sarah said before she disappeared and ran back to her small Room of Alchemy.

The Ordinary Healing reagent was just a potion recipe with trash quality but it was a Tier-1 recipe nonetheless. It was of exceptional use and it could play a major role in the fight against the Vampires.

"We don't have the necessary ores for the spiked armor though," Old Jeff suddenly announced, attracting Dilan's attention.

"I know that but I thought that you could replace the ore with another one that has similar characteristics as the Silver Dawn ore mentioned in the armor blueprint," Dilan provided a solution though he was fully aware that this was not easy.

Dilan's opinion of Old Jeff was great and he believed that the old man was able to make everything possible.

"Urgh...well, I can try it. Right now, I don't really have the motivation to keep tormenting my head with attempts to create weapons out of wands, either way..." Old Jeff sounded frustrated but Dilan could understand where he was coming from. The old blacksmith had made several unsuccessful attempts to create wand weapons which saddened him a bit.

However, then again, nobody ever said that it would be easy to invent something entirely new. That was also why Dilan didn't think much about it.

"Can you make use of the Thunderbolt Eagle's body as well? Its talons and beak should make great weapons and I need some new daggers. I broke three CrimsonClaw Daggers while fighting the Thunderbolt Eagle," Dilan asked hopefully to which Old Jeff could only nod his head.

However, he was still astonished because he didn't know that the CrimsonClaw Daggers had broken in the fight against the Thunderbolt Eagle.

"Is the defense of Tier-2 monsters really that strong?" Old Jeff asked silently to himself.

But this time it was not Dilan, who answered but everyone else, who had been with him at that time, who answered at the same time.

"It's much worse than you can expect."

Chapter 304 Cute and Lovely Psycho

After Dilan handed the corpse of the Thunderbolt Eagle to Old Jeff, the old blacksmith disappeared as well.

Several Ascenders followed him because they were interested in the Thunderbolt Eagle. The hide of monsters was easier to remove from a corpse but one could still tell how strong the monsters were when they had been alive.

There were a bunch of blacksmiths in Old Jeff's group, a few leatherworkers, a few Survivors, who focused on producing arrows, and so on.

The fight between the women and Dilan was over and everyone, who paid enough attention, realized that Vampires were not a race one should underestimate.

Victoria might look as if she was obsessed with loving and caring for others right now but it was not as if the earlier fight was already forgotten. Her change of appearance after the use of her stat-amplifying occupational ability was something that had been imprinted in everyone's head, and that was frightening enough for most to realize that it was time to become stronger.

Their group's meeting was not yet over and it was necessary for them to create a proper plan on how to become stronger. Dilan and Victoria gauged that they roughly had, at least, a week to become stronger.

After that week, the first groups of Vampires should have reached the Sanctum and found their way to Shiron. In a matter of three weeks, all the groups of Vampires would have reached them provided Dilan would stay at the exact same place for the following weeks.

That wouldn't happen but it was not bad to know about certain possibilities.

"Dilan...where did you find that ability crystal?" Yvonne suddenly asked. She was still caught in Victoria's arm, which made it difficult for her to move. However, the ability crystal Dilan had thrown toward her not too long ago attracted her interest.

[[Death Curse] Ungraded ★ |Growth Type|

Requirement: Ability related to -Undead Summoning- or -Control of the Undead-

-Ability 1: One Unit of Mana will be used to enhance the stats of One Undead under the host's control by 1%.

Duration: 60 Seconds.

Remark: The Ability cannot be used on the same Undead monster several times in succession.

-Ability 2: [Locked]

-Passive Ability 1: The difficulty to control resilient Undeads decreases.]

"Isn't the ability great? I took it from the Blue Star camp's treasury. They won't miss it," Dilan said lightly with a smile on his face before he added, "It can grow strong as well, though I don't know how to make use of the 'Growth Type' tag."

Yvonne could tell that the Death Curse ability was great and she had bound it to herself without hesitation. However, the biggest question in front of her still was how to improve it.

"Oh?" Yvonne suddenly exclaimed as she was flooded with all the necessary information about the ability crystal that crumbled in her hand.

"Growth type abilities require Essences to advance! You can just feed them Essence crystals by thinking about feeding them," Yvonne muttered when she digested the information.

'Essences? That is a pretty interesting way to increase the strength of an ability...' Dilan thought while his mind drifted away.

It was pretty interesting if one thought about it. Upgrading one's abilities was certainly not easy and using Essence crystals could be said to make things quite a bit easier.

Yvonne could hunt hundreds of monsters in a short period just to upgrade her ability to a much higher star rating.

'Maybe I should get a Growth type ability as well?' Dilan thought for a moment before he shook his head.

'I would rather focus on procuring abilities that are of exceptional use to me. My abilities should be related to my Origin ability and my occupations...or at the very least, my future abilities should allow me to become much stronger and amplify my other abilities, whether that is in a direct way or indirectly!' He added inwardly as ambition gleamed in his sky blue eyes.

Yvonne was still trying to wriggle out of Victoria's hold, who snuggled up to the little helpless woman.

"We should enter the Pagoda of Time again. It is about time that we procure more whetstones and other treasures, and I need more Dungeon Points to buy something in the Taurus shop. There should be something we can use to fight the Vampires with much more ease.

Furthermore, I need Essence crystals to exchange them with Lightning attributed Bronze Essence crystals, otherwise, I will never be able to upgrade [Thunder Step] again..." Dilan spoke in a serious, yet somewhat light tone as he mentioned the Pagoda of Time.

Kathrine and Yvonne didn't really have a problem with the Instance Dungeon or the Pagoda of Time, but many Ascenders around Dilan felt a sudden shudder spreading through their entire body.

Victoria noticed this, which was why she turned serious. She stopped squishing Yvonne's cheek and started to intently listen to the murmuring that went on around them.

"The Pagoda of Time is it?... Well, if you go with others it will be fine. But aren't you already at or above level 15? You cannot enter the Pagoda of Time in that case..." Williams suddenly said. He was pretty sure that Dilan's level exceeded 15 by now.

He had absorbed a huge number of high-quality Essence crystals, including the Bronze Tier-2 Essence crystal of the Thunderbolt Eagle.

"I'm still at Level 14, which is why I can still enter the Pagoda of Time. I will pick out a few Ascenders to enter the Pagoda of Time soon. Though, I don't really need any help to clear it. I just need them for their numbers," Dilan knew that the Pagoda of Time's group modus operandi was a lot different than the Duo or Solo mode.

However, that didn't really matter because the only thing that would vary as the number of monsters and not their strength. The strongest monster was still the Gold Tier-1 Minotaur leader, which was why Dilan could easily use the Blazing Serpentine Blade to kill all the monsters, except the Minotaur with it.

For the Gold Tier-1 Minotaur, Dilan could still use the last CrimsonClaw dagger he had. Thus, Dilan was not worried as long as the other Ascenders were not stupid enough to die while simply standing around instead of fighting.

“You’re at Level 14? I thought you would be close to level 25...” Victoria blurted out all of a sudden. She stared at him in confusion and her shock made her loosen her grip on Yvonne. This allowed the young woman to escape the Vampire’s clutches. She fled and hid behind Kathrine, who could only smile weakly.

“I need more Essences than others to level up. But there is no need to be worried about this. Even if there will be more Tier-2 monsters or even Ascenders, I can still kill them after Old Jeff creates proper weapons out of the Thunderbolt Eagle’s talons,” Dilan was quite nonchalant with the truth. It was nothing new for the others to know that Dilan needed more Essences than them.

The only reason for Williams to ask about the Pagoda of Time was the fact that there weren’t many powerful Ascenders below Level 15. Most had already crossed that Level and the remaining Ascenders, who Dilan could take with him were either scared of the Pagoda of Time, or they were not focused on close combat.

“Okay...if you say so, Darling,” Victoria nodded her head, believing everything he said. Kathrine’s fists were shrouded in currents of electricity the moment she heard Victoria call Dilan ‘darling’ but she calmed down quickly.

“Dilan, do you need help to upgrade [Thunder Step]? I have enough Mana to roast...I mean help you...” Kathrine’s eyes gleamed dangerously but Dilan ignored the jibe and nodded his head.

“I only need more Lightning attributed Bronze Essence crystals for now because the Thunderbolt Eagle struck me quite often with its bolts of lightning. But once I upgrade [Thunder Step] it would be great if you can help me advance [Thunder Step] to Tier-1!” He said with a bright smile, acting as if the dangerous gleam in Kathrine’s eyes wasn’t directed at him.

“He really loves to play with fire...That’s so hot~!” Victoria exclaimed in delight before she appeared right behind Dilan to hug him in the same way she hugged Yvonne.

“Fortunately, I love to play with fire as much as you do~” Victoria whispered in Dilan’s ear before she smiled provokingly at Kathrine.

“Y-You...bitch!” Kathrine screamed at Victoria as a bolt of lightning appeared in between her hands. Dilan frowned when he saw this.

“Have fun~” Victoria mumbled and she disappeared just before the bolt of lightning was fired. It hit Dilan instead of Victoria, who had long since escaped to a safe spot behind Kathrine, whom she began to touch as well.

“What a cute and lovely psycho you are, Kathrine~”

Chapter 305 Hidden Intentions

“Are we really going to enter the Pagoda of Time...?I’m scared...” A middle-aged woman asked the small group with trembling hands.

“Dilan will be with us, so there won’t be a problem. He even told us that we should just support him from the sidelines with supporting abilities if we don’t want to fight,” The voice of a young man reached the anxious woman, who turned around. Her eyes were overflowing with fear and it almost looked like she was going to pass out at any moment.

“Furthermore, you need some combat experience, Kira...You have great abilities but they’re all useless if you’re not on the battlefield. Whether it is your [Healing Aura], the [Battle Aura], or the [Mana Aura], all of them need you to be in the center of the biggest crowd of people to be of any use at all.

If we want to survive in the world Milarn turned to, everyone of us needs to fight!” The young man said in a calm tone while trying to convince the middle-aged woman that it was necessary for her to fight as well.

“Mike is right, everyone needs to learn how to fight. This is not only important for the group’s sake but also for your own safety. I might not always be there to protect everyone and there will often be times in the future when I cannot handle fighting all opponents at the same time.

For example, I won’t be able to hold several Vampires back from entering our base the moment they spread out when they attack,” Dilan suggested as he joined the group of nine Tier-1 Ascenders.

He felt good that Mike, the young man, supported him wholeheartedly, especially because it looked like Mike understood his intentions.

“Imagine what would happen if a race like the Ligrav or Rasnian were to appear, tens of thousands of them at that. Would you give up and allow them to trample over you and your friends, or would you fight until every single one of your opponents has been obliterated?” Dilan asked with a gentle smile on his lips, making them think hard.

He didn’t want the others to feel overwhelmed in any way, so he didn’t let them know that the Vampires would become troublesome to deal with the moment Dilan’s Ascenders would choose to run away like cowards instead of fighting them seriously.

There was no need for Dilan to pressure anyone. Half a day had passed since he and the others had returned from the Blue Star camp and the report he had given to the management to get to know all the necessary pieces of information had spread through the entire camp.

Everyone could sense the danger of Tier-2 monsters by now, and knew the fact that Vampires were both dangerous and extremely beneficial for the growth of Ascenders. Now it was on the Ascenders to decide whether they would dare to fight the large numbers of Vampires that were supposed to reach their base in a week or so, or if they would crumble in fear and abandon their stronghold.

“Let’s go to the Pagoda of Time. I want to create new records. The nine of you will gain a lot from the Dungeon points we will receive as well. Whether you chose to use the Dungeon Points to improve your equipment, buy new ability crystals or do other things with them is none of my concern. But there was a reason for me to pick the nine of you to join me in the raid of the Instance Dungeon’s group mode, so I hope for the best,” Dilan tried to cheer them up with some uplifting words.

He didn't hide his intentions as he stepped outside the base in the Instance Dungeon's direction. Dilan motioned the others to follow him but all of them felt a heavy pressure weighing down on them as they looked at Dilan's broad back.

"He didn't pick us to fill in the numbers? Wasn't that what everyone said?" Kira asked, feeling a bit stunned. She thought that Dilan could have chosen someone else to join the raid of the Instance dungeon, someone who was ready to fight with their life on the line.

However, it looked like Dilan had a reason to choose his teammates and that she just didn't understand it.

"Looks like it...Maybe he wants us to become stronger as well to be of most use when the fight against the Vampires happens?" Mike countered in an uncertain voice before he followed Dilan. He trusted their leader and knew that Dilan wouldn't blatantly lie to them.

Slowly everyone else followed Dilan and Mike, only for Kira to stay back the longest. She took a deep breath after everyone left before she clenched her fist as she followed them as well.

In front of the Pagoda of Time, Dilan looked into the eyes of the nine Ascenders around him. Some of them were a bit afraid but Dilan merely smiled as he said one last thing,

"If you don't want to fight, just use your abilities to increase my strength. The first nine floors will be a breeze, which means that it won't be necessary for any of you to waste your precious mana. For the next few floors, some help would be great but it won't be necessary. You guys can act in whatever way you are comfortable with, while I will take care of everything," Dilan didn't want his people to feel bad and be 'useless' for the mission.

Dilan would never think of anyone as useless as long as they gave their best. Overcoming mental burdens was not easy but Dilan was pretty sure that it would help the nine Ascenders to understand the reality when they would see him fighting.

'The moment they realize that I was barely able to kill the Thunderbolt Eagle with my strength, they will understand why I want them to become stronger!' Dilan thought, certain that his psychological trick would somehow work out.

He stretched his body a bit and took a last glance at the small group of Ascenders behind him before he entered the Pagoda of Time.

[Please select one of the three modes; <Solo>, <Duo>, or <Group> to proceed!]

A notification popped up in front of Dilan when he entered the Pagoda of Time and he followed the guidelines by choosing the <Group> mode!

In the following seconds, the others joined him as well. A total of 10 Ascenders below Tier-1 Level 15 could enter the Pagoda of Time, and these numbers were filled up in the blink of an eye.

Once everyone was ready, the Pagoda of Time teleported them to a ginormous room that resembled an enlarged form of the pagoda's first floor.

It was more than 100 meters in both length and width and the ceiling was more than 10 meters high. The room was huge but it was equally crammed with hundreds of bloodthirsty monsters.

Various bipedal groups of monsters emerged out of nowhere. They wielded all kinds of weapons and glared at Dilan's group of 10 people with the intent to kill.

"That's cute. Since when are Ordinary Tier-1 monsters allowed to stare at me like that?" Dilan asked with a distinct glint in his eyes.

He released all of his strength at once, and wielded the Blazing Serpentine Blade in one hand, just for an ordinary Serpentine Blade to manifest in his other hand.

"Since when did you begin to wield two Serpentine Blades?" Mike suddenly asked, failing to hide his astonishment.

Dilan merely smiled in return as he activated [Thunder Step] to amplify his Agility by 30% to more than 130 Units.

"Since today," He answered before turning into a purple dash that disappeared from right in front of them. The wooden floor creaked because of the terrific impact Dilan's feet caused when they touched it, resulting in a rapidly growing spiral of cracks.

However, that was not something anyone could focus on as everyone's eyes widened in terror the moment they perceived that the purple flash massacred all the monsters in a twenty meters radius around him as if they were livestock and not powerful monsters.

Every single second felt like an eternity to the Ascenders, who wasn't even moving as they looked at the unfolding scenario in front of them.

Their eyes widened in shock and they couldn't comprehend what was going on until a notification popped up in front of them.

[First floor has been cleared successfully. Time required [0:49]. Perfect! New record for the <Group> mode's first floor has been set.]

Chapter 306 Perfect Raid

[First floor has been cleared successfully. Time required [0:49]. Perfect! New record for the <Group> mode's first floor has been set.]

"Did we just clear the first floor...in 49 seconds?" Mike asked, feeling dumbfounded when he realized that Dilan had already disappeared to the second floor.

"Dilan left already! Let's follow him quickly!" He shouted before rushing up the stairs to the second floor.

When they reached the second floor, all the nine Ascenders could see was the purple flash massacring the masses of weak monsters.

They were incapable of protecting themselves, and their weapons burst into a thousand pieces the moment they collided with one of Dilan's Serpentine Blades. Soon after, all the monsters died at his hands.

[Second floor has been cleared successfully. Time required [0:41]. Perfect! New record for the <Group> mode's second floor has been set.]

In no time, a second notification appeared in front of everyone's face and the nine Ascenders swallowed their saliva when they saw that Dilan had disappeared once again.

"He really wants to rush through the Pagoda of Time..." Kira mumbled in disbelief, while another woman who was next to him couldn't help but stare at the corpses around her in shock.

"I mean...he said that the first nine floors would be done in a breeze...but imagine if we had to face someone as strong as Dilan..." The woman said, her voice cracking a bit at the end. She began to shiver at the thought of someone like Dilan attacking them.

"We would die...all of us," Mike said in all honesty before he added, "...and Dilan was barely able to kill the Tier-2 Thunderbolt Eagle...that means if we were to face that Thunderbolt Eagle...all of us would be dead as well..."

Knowing something and witnessing the same are two different things. The mindset of most humans prevented them from actually feeling that something was the truth when they had only heard about something that was supposed to be impossible.

However, witnessing it forced them to believe what had just happened because they saw it with their own pair of eyes.

"Tier-2 monsters...are not something he can defeat yet. Dilan is completely right...we need to become stronger, a lot stronger than we are now, whether it is with respect to our mentality or our body..." Kira said, acknowledging Dilan's earlier words. He was right and the nine Ascenders began to accept this.

"He is really a good leader...we cannot disappoint him after all the effort he took to teach us something. We have to make sure to meet his expectations!" Mike declared and clenched his fist while determination gleamed in his eyes.

All of a sudden, a third notification appeared in front of everyone, stupefying the Ascenders.

[Third floor has been cleared successfully. Time required [0:51]. Perfect! New record for the <Group> mode's third floor has been set.]

"He is way too fast, let's follow him!" Kira suddenly rushed to the third floor to reach the fourth floor in order to reach Dilan. Dilan had said before that he needed their support from the 10th floor onward. And now, Kira wanted to be of help to him as she understood everything. Her mind was still not ready to accept everything but she knew that now was not the time to hesitate.

Thus, she reached the fourth floor and prepared herself to activate her Auras the moment Dilan required them.

Several minutes passed by in which Dilan killed all the monsters around him easily. In less than ten minutes after entering the Pagoda of Time, he reached the 10th floor, where the first Silver Tier-1 monsters appeared.

The ordinary Serpentine Blade disappeared in his storage ring because the weapon was not powerful enough to cause enough damage anymore. Dilan wouldn't be able to cut through his opponent with simply a light swing of his arm and it took him much more force.

Thus, he relied only on the Blazing Serpentine Blade for the following four floors. From the 10th to the 14th floor, Dilan received several enhancements from Kirlia and the others. They didn't join the battle but they supported him with the use of their abilities.

Meanwhile, Dilan had enhanced the Blazing Serpentine Blade's sharpness with the use of one of the highest quality whetstones they had. This was more than enough to make conquering the final floor look like a breeze where a total of 10 Gold Tier-1 Minotaur Leaders were waiting for him.

"Finally some action. A total of 10 Minotaurs with a Strength of 100 Units. I want to see how you can handle a fully empowered [Mana Slash]!" Dilan mumbled with a faint smile on his face.

As he said so, a black dagger appeared in his free hand. The electricity currents around his feet were pulled to the first Thunderbolt Dagger that Old Jeff had finished crafting in the last few hours.

It was made from one of the Thunderbolt Eagle's talons and was sharp enough to easily cut through the hide of the Gold Tier-1 Minotaur Leaders.

That was great but it was not what Dilan intended to do. Instead, he activated [Mana Slash] on the Thunderbolt Dagger with a total of 50 Units of Mana used at once.

This drained Dilan of the vast majority of mana he possessed after charging through the first 14 floors. He didn't want his attempt at a perfect raid to be a waste. Thus he smiled brightly as he slashed the fully empowered Thunderbolt Dagger in the direction of the ten Gold Tier-1 Minotaur leaders that were charging at him with their full might.

They could tell that Dilan was extremely powerful but they still thought that it would be possible to defeat Dilan. Their numerical advantage was quite big, after all!

However, the moment a highly compressed crescent-shaped mass of mana was released through the Thunderbolt Dagger, the Minotaur Leaders' couldn't even react properly. Their eyes widened and they attempted to release all their abilities to counter the Mana Slash, and to survive by all possible means.

Unfortunately, all of their attempts were for naught as their bodies were cut in half the moment the crescent-shaped Mana Slash came in touch with them!

When Dilan saw this, he smiled brightly. The Mana Slash cut through the hide of Gold Tier-1 monsters easily and it was not even done at that point. The Mana Slash trembled for a moment and it looked almost as if it would burst apart and crumble into a thousand pieces.

Luckily, the enormous mass of mana that was held together in the crescent-shaped Mana Slash stabilized just moments later as it kept advancing. It progressed, and cut through all the opponents that were in its way before it smashed into the Pagoda's wall, where it finally stopped.

Dilan's sky blue eyes gleamed brightly as a surge of pride filled his body before he set off once again. He rushed through the final floor of the Pagoda of Time, and used his entire strength to kill the final

opponents while ignoring the nine Ascenders, who were staring at the damaged wall opposite them in terror.

“Even with that attack he was barely able to kill the Thunderbolt Eagle...you must be kidding me...” Kira mumbled in shock, realizing with glaring clarity that Dilan was not just trying to help them. Rather, he was trying to make sure that they would survive by all means. With a start, she realized that the moment they encountered a Tier-2 monster, they would be dead.

And that would even be the case if they were to face ordinary Level 0 Tier-2 monsters...Kira was sure of that.

[Fifteenth floor has been cleared successfully. Time required [2:51]. Perfect! New record for the <Group> mode’s fifteenth floor has been set.]

[Pagoda of Time has been conquered with a new record on each floor. In total, the participants have managed to set 15 ‘Perfect’ records. 7000 Dungeon points will be granted.]

[The participants secured a Perfect Raid in the <Group> Mode. They will be rewarded with the title <Dungeon Conqueror>, 3000 Dungeon points, and access to the Hidden Shop of Taurus, the Mighty!]

[Because the participants are the first to secure a Perfect Raid in any of the three modes, they will be rewarded with a One-time 30% discount in the Shop!]

“Damn...” A single word escaped the lips of the nine Ascenders, who hadn’t done anything great to receive all the gains Dilan had worked his ass off for.

Their Log of the Ancient changed a bit as the icon of Hidden Shop from Taurus, the Mighty appeared in it.

They received a total of 10,000 Dungeon points, their first title, and a discount for the next item they had purchased in the Shop. That was amazing and solely possible due to Dilan’s terrific strength.

“Oh? That’s great...maybe I should aim for a Perfect raid in the Solo and Duo modi as well...”

Chapter 307 [Grand Dungeon Conqueror]

“This title is amazing!” Kira said in an exhilarated voice after she finished reading through the [Dungeon Conqueror]’s title description.

[[Dungeon Conqueror] <Gold Tier-1>

A limited title that is only granted to a few exceptional Individuals.

As long as the title is equipped the host receives;

-15% discount in all Dungeon shops

-More information about the Dungeon when it’s first discovered.

-Special sale notifications about all unlocked shops

-Amplification of all stats while being inside a dungeon! +5%]

Everyone agreed with Kira after they finished reading through the title's description as well. The nine Ascenders were still in front of the Pagoda of Time and were waiting for Dilan to finish his Solo raid.

Kira had entered the Pagoda of Time with Dilan to clear the floor in the Duo raid, while the others had been focused on collecting the Essences, the pieces of equipment that had dropped from the monsters Dilan killed, along with miscellaneous but important goods that dropped such as the whetstones.

When the eight Ascenders were done, Kira was already waiting for them outside with an expression of terror on her face. Dilan advanced through the Duo mode of the Pagoda of Time in an even shorter time than he required to finish the Group mode. This was only obvious because the number of monsters spawning on each floor was different.

However, Dilan was not supposed to have any mana left after he finished the Group Mode. Dilan ignored all logic as his stats increased by close to 50% before he used the [Thunder Step] ability as well to further increase his stats.

Kira didn't realize that Dilan had used his Special trait [Bearer of Pain] to turn his life force into Mana. This in turn, inevitably activated [Bearer of Pain], which amplified his stats altogether.

In less than ten minutes, Dilan finished the Pagoda of Time's raid in a perfect manner. He broke his earlier records easily and went over to the Solo Mode, which he entered alone.

Meanwhile, Kira and the others patiently waited for Dilan. They thought that it would take him quite a while to clear the floor and return, especially because the time inside the Pagoda of Time passed slower than outside. One minute inside the Pagoda of Time was equivalent to four minutes in the outside world.

However, Dilan didn't even require half an hour before he emerged outside the Pagoda of Time once again. A faint smile shrouded his bloody appearance. He was more than satisfied with the final outcome.

[The host set records for three Perfect Raids in the Pagoda of Time. He was the first to accomplish this feat. Congratulations]

[Due to the host's terrific achievements, the title [Dungeon Conqueror] will advance to the title [Grand Dungeon Conqueror]. The host will also receive an additional bonus of 10,000 Dungeon Points as a reward for his extraordinary achievement!]

It was impossible for Dilan to be dissatisfied with the final result of a few hours of hard work. His stamina had hit rock bottom by now but it had definitely been worth it.

Per perfect raid, he had received a total of 7,000 dungeon points. After Dilan added the extra bonus he received and the points he already had, his balance reached a total of 50,500 Dungeon points!

With that many points, he could purchase numerous exceptional weapons, ability crystals, or other things. However, it would be a total waste for him to purchase several weapons because he was still in possession of a Discount coupon worth 30% for his next sale.

And then, there was still his advanced title.

[[Dungeon Conqueror] <Gold Tier-1>

A limited title that is only granted to one Individual per existing Dungeon.

As long as the title is equipped the host receives;

-25% discount in all Dungeon shops

-The majority of information about the Dungeon when it's first discovered.

-Special sale notifications about all unlocked shops and secret hidden shops

-15% amplification of all stats while being inside a dungeon!]

"A 30% Discount for the Coupon, and all my purchases are discounted by 25% to begin with. Not bad, not bad, at all!" Dilan mumbled in satisfaction before he took a glance at the special sales that would be accessible only when the [Grand Dungeon Conqueror] title was equipped.

'A stat increase of 15% will also be of great use when I'm inside the Instance Dungeon of the Blood Monarch's Sanctum...' Dilan thought before he averted his gaze to the Log of the Ancient where a new icon had appeared above the Taurus' Shops Icon.

[Sale] was written on the icon in bright red letters and Dilan pressed his index finger on it with great curiosity.

A huge list of items popped up in front of him, attracting him greatly.

**

-Ability Crystals-

[Superhuman Strength(Passive)] <Tier-3 ★★★> – 100,000 DP(Dungeon Points)

[Gravity Control] <Ungraded★ Growth>- 300,000 DP

-Armaments-

[Dragon Slayer] <Diamond Tier-3> – 1,500,000 DP

[Hermes' Helmet(Replication)] <Platinum Tier-2> – 500,000 DP

...

-Materials-

[Unicorn Horn] <Diamond Tier-4> – 7,800,000 DP

[Titanium] <Silver Tier-2> – 2,000DP/kg

...

-Special items-

Magic Scroll [Zeus' Wrath] <Diamond Tier-2> 300,000 DP

...

..

-Refreshes in [23H:59M]-

**

The list of items on sale was seemingly endless and all items piqued his curiosity. Despite his interest, there was not even a single item he could or wanted to purchase with his hard-earned Dungeon Points.

None of them attracted his interest, which was why he averted his attention away from the list of items on sale.

“Should we go back? I think you guys must have a hard time reconsidering what to purchase from the Taurus shop. Use your Dungeon Points carefully because you never know when you will be able to accumulate so many coins ever again!” Dilan lectured the nine Ascenders and everyone nodded their heads in understanding.

They knew that Dilan could collect Dungeon Points much faster than them but even he was now having problems gaining as many Dungeon Points as he received by breaking the records he set just a while ago.

Breaking a record would only reward Dungeon Points if a higher ranking was reached, and there was nothing above a perfect score! That meant Dilan wouldn't be able to get Dungeon Points from the Pagoda of Time for anything but the bare minimum that is awarded for the completion of the raid.

However, that was a waste of time because Dilan had much better things to do than to spend half an hour to get his hand on 500 Dungeon Points.

“Now the biggest question is what should I do with all these Essence crystals...” Dilan mumbled as he got an idea.

‘The trading hub!’

He recalled that Sven and the others had finally created the trading hub. A currency system was invented and everyone earned Essence crystals in exchange for the work they did.

Even Survivors were able to earn Essence crystals, and they had to pay for everything they wanted from others.

Every single task was rewarded with a specific number of Essence crystals that was directly related to the difficulty of the given task. The harder the task the higher the rewards both in terms of quality and quantity. This was the most basic way to create a currency system.

Everyone had to pay Old Jeff if they wanted something from him. On the other hand, Old Jeff would have to purchase ores and other ingredients if he wanted to use them.

The system was not perfect yet but Old Jeff was supported by Dilan and the others, especially because they wanted the old man to keep forging weapons for them and continue to research Wands, and what made them special.

Sven was constantly updating the system because it was near-impossible to create a perfect currency system but Dilan was rather surprised with how easily everyone adapted to it.

After all, everything had been free before and it had never really been necessary to pay for anything in his group.

This had changed but Dilan was yet to hear a single complaint about it. Rather, everyone was quite satisfied because more work would directly result in better and upgraded living conditions than before.

That was something he quickly noticed when he reached the trading hub Sarah and the others had wanted for the entire time.

“This looks much better than expected!

Chapter 308 Trading Hub

The Trading hub was located outside their base. There had been a small security building between the alloy factory that was used by Old Jeff and all the training Ascenders, and the toy factory that was renovated to become their base.

The security building was a three-story tall building and Dilan was able to see and perceive many busy assistants bustling through the shops.

Two Tier-1 Ascenders guarded the trading hub to make sure that nobody would steal things. They looked a bit bored but Dilan ignored this with a faint smile.

‘Looks like nobody ever tried to steal something,’ He merely thought before he averted his focus to all the items that were exhibited in the trading hub.

“Sir you cannot enter the shop with your appear—...B-B..Boss...How can I help you?!” The female assistant, who saw him walk in, thought that Dilan was an ordinary customer at first. Only when she saw his face did she realize that it was their Boss.

Dilan looked down at himself and quickly noticed that he was still covered in dirt, bits of flesh, and blood. He didn’t want to dirty the goods around him, which was why he left the shop at once. With a single jump, he caused the ground below him to crackle as he jumped on top of the building, where he changed his clothes quickly.

Afterward, he landed on the ground again with clean clothes. He wiped his face and tried to wipe away all the blood but that was easier said than done.

The Tier-1 Guards flinched and went into a combat stance when Dilan landed on the ground. They looked at him dumbfoundedly before their mind comprehended what was going on.

They went stiff and hurriedly saluted toward Dilan.

“Boss, you are here!”

Dilan nodded at them before he entered the shop once again. The female assistant rushed to him while tidying her clothes.

She halted two meters in front of them and clasped her hands lightly before she bowed to him.

“Boss, how may I help you?” She asked while trying to stop her voice from shaking.

“I want to exchange my Essence crystals and I need 44 Bronze Essence crystals with the Lightning attribute for now,” Dilan answered, ignoring the woman’s nervousity. He smiled gently to calm her but that didn’t really seem to work.

“O-of course, Boss! I will show you all the Lightning attributed Essence crystals we have!” She hurriedly exclaimed before rushing to the back of the room. With quick movements, her hand reached out to a few boxes. They were neatly labeled and stacked in rows and inside them, one could see Penta-Item pouches.

‘We should try to find items similar to the Penta-Item pouches sooner or later,’ Dilan thought, clearly understanding that they lacked a good storage space to store all kinds of items.

The female assistant rushed back to him after she went upstairs for a few minutes. Another woman followed her but she didn’t say anything. Her eyes gleamed brightly as her gaze was fixated on Dilan.

“Every single Lightning-attributed Essence crystal in the trading hub’s possession is stored in these Penta-item pouches,” the female assistant said hurriedly as she pushed them in Dilan’s hand.

Dilan looked at the female assistant skeptically. However, she was not able to endure his gaze and hurriedly hid behind the other woman.

“Am I that scary?” He mumbled to himself before he shook his head to discard this thought, “By the way, is that how you normally treat your customers? I mean do you hand them everything they need and simply walk away? Shouldn’t it be a bit...different? I mean I could take out more and higher quality Essence crystals without you guys noticing,” Dilan asked, feeling genuinely curious.

If that were to be the case, the customer service would have to be remodeled. The woman who had been quiet for the entire time shook her head as she began to explain,

“Boss, this is just because you are our leader. You don’t need to worry about someone stealing anything from us. I’m a business major and the others working here are also experienced in selling goods. You could say that this is preferential treatment because everything in the base belongs to you, either way...everything!” The woman stressed the word ‘everything’ twice. Dilan understood the hidden intentions beneath her words but he couldn’t care less about that.

“Alright, then stop with the preferential treatment and give me the normal rates. I want to see how the trading hub works,” Dilan said calmly as he handed the Penta-item pouches over to the woman before he walked over to the counter.

The silent woman looked at Dilan with a faint smile until she went back to the counter as well.

‘He is really different from other men. Usually, everyone feels proud about what I said but he couldn’t care less...’ She thought before she appeared at the counter opposite Dilan.

“You wanted 44 Lightning attributed Bronze Essence crystals, right?” She asked in a completely different tone to what she had used while talking to him before. The woman sounded professional, which was something that caused Dilan to nod approvingly.

“Right now, I only need that, yes,” He answered as he looked at the woman, who began to calculate something.

“One Lightning attributed Essence crystal is worth 6 ordinary Essence crystals of the same quality and tier, and the service fee for this exchange is one Bronze Essence crystal. That would be 265 Bronze Essence crystals,” The woman looked up and informed him after she calculated the final price.

After hearing the offered price, Dilan revealed a batch of Tier-1 Essence crystals. “I have no idea how high the exchange ratio is but I don’t have Tierless Essence crystals.” He stated honestly to which the woman nodded her head in understanding.

She picked up one Bronze Tier-1 Essence crystal and returned a few Tierless Silver Essence crystals, and a handful of Bronze Essence crystals as well. Dilan still wasn’t aware of the exchange ratio but it didn’t really matter.

The Lightning-attributed Bronze Essence crystals were much cheaper than he could have hoped for. A 6:1 exchange ratio for rare Lightning attributed Essence crystals was exceptional in his opinion, even more so because he thought that his ratio would be around 15:1.

No sooner was the deal done, Dilan absorbed the Bronze Lightning Essence crystal immediately. When all Essence crystals were absorbed three notifications popped up in front of him.

[-[Thunder Step] Tier-0 ★★★★★-

Upgrade requirements have been met!

1) Get struck by lightning (5/5)!

2) Absorb <Lightning> attributed Bronze Essence crystals (50/50)!

[[[Thunder Step] Tier-0 ★★★★★] has been upgraded to [Thunder Step] Tier-0 ★★★★★! Congratulations!]

[-[Thunder Step] Tier-0 ★★★★★-

Upgrade requirements

1) Get struck by lightning (5/25)!

2) Absorb <Lightning> attributed Tier-1 Essence crystals(1/1000)!

Dilan smiled a bit odd when he looked at the updated upgrade requirements. They were somewhat annoying because the requirements went from a difficulty of 1 to 100 real quick.

But it was not as if he could do something against it, which was why he smiled a bit weirdly at the woman in front of him.

“How many Tier-1 Lightning attributed Essence crystals do you have in the trading hub?” He asked while trying to sound unbothered by it.

“Eh...there should be around one...or maybe two hundred. Do you need them, Boss?” The woman asked eagerly, ready to serve Dilan at once and please him.

“I wish to take all Tier-1 Lightning attributed Essence crystals, and I would like to create a mission as well,” Dilan replied while accessing the storage ring where numerous Essence crystals and corpses were stored.

More than a thousand Essence crystals of Ordinary, Bronze, and Silver Tier-1 monsters appeared in front of the young woman, who tried to control herself.

“You...are really the only one, who treats Essence crystals so lightly...as if their value is equivalent to that of pebbles scattered on a gravel path...” She mumbled and Dilan just smiled in return without offering an explanation.

The Essence crystals were truly of no use for him. He would have to absorb the Essence of tens of thousand of Silver Essence crystals to level up once. Instead of forcing himself to level up, he would rather improve his stats by fighting monsters and Ascenders, who were at a higher level. Their Essence was more valuable to him, and his stats increased much more when he defeated those, who were supposed to be stronger.

When Dilan finished the deal, he received a total of 185 Tier-1 Essence crystals. He absorbed them immediately before he left every single Essence crystal in his possession behind for the trading hub to use to purchase the Tier-1 Lightning Essence crystals he asked for in the mission.

Missions were something individual Ascenders could create in the Trading hub. There was a bulletin board that many Ascenders would regularly read through every day to figure out what missions earned them most.

They wanted to amass more funds to purchase equipment that was perfectly suited for them, including ability crystals, and other miscellaneous items.

The trading hub was thriving and it looked like things were getting a lot easier thanks to its existence.

However, there were always people who felt discriminated against. After all, those who didn't work weren't favored by the regulations and system Sven had imported!

Chapter 309 Progress

Dilan had not spent a lot of time on the base during the last few days. He noticed that many things had changed in a positive way, such as the safety around their base, which had been reinforced.

There was almost nothing that had changed negatively and Dilan liked this a lot. A few Survivors kept complaining about the changes that occurred when Sven's new currency system had been imported but the complaints died down quickly.

Everyone frowned at the complaining Survivors, and they were quickly outcasts just because nobody wanted to be around those, who were lazy and entitled. The Primordial Ascension had changed everything and the lazy and entitled were bound to die first. That was something most Survivors and Ascenders understood best.

The hardworking people would survive, become stronger and create a safety net around themselves by working together, while the weak would either die or barely receive something to stay alive.

Sven was merciless because he merely handed over a bowl of plain soup without any meat if they didn't pay up for food. This forced the lazy and entitled to start working because they had already grown accustomed to eating meat and wild vegetables during lunch and dinner.

To prevent being outcasted and get enough food, one had to do the dishes, at the very least. This was not actually hard and even the complaining Survivors couldn't help but feel that they might have overdone it. If they had to do some simple things such as picking up trash, cleaning, doing dishes or the laundry to get warm meals, patrolling the area, and befriending the others, it was not actually worth complaining about.

"Wow, this is amazing!" Dilan exclaimed when he arrived on the top of their base. A huge garden covered the entire flat rooftop and a while later, the young nurse, Mira, and a few other Ascenders entered his view.

Mira rushed toward him, her face smudged with dirt as she smiled proudly at their leader,

"Aren't we great? In a month or so we'll be able to start using and supplying our very own vegetables! We won't need to scourge the Mountain Ring of the Elements for wild vegetables anymore," Sarah exclaimed with a smirk on her face.

Dilan just smiled in return before he nodded his head. Mira's [Botanica Lexica Magica] ability had been of exceptional use, and so was her [Green Finger] passive ability. The garden on the rooftop was being tended to by more than four women, who had picked occupations and abilities that were directly related to gardening, or farming.

This was exceptionally useful, and the only downside could be considered the lack of highly nutritious soil to plant something in. It had already been difficult to let Mira and the others use all the space on the rooftop for their garden, especially because the entire group required lots of space for various reasons, such as the Ascenders' training.

"You guys are really great, I'm already curious to know how the vegetables with which you guys cooked the food will taste!" Dilan said excitedly before he spoke with Kira and the others for a while. He left them afterward to look over the rooftop to see where everyone was and what they were doing.

His group was bustling with energy as everyone was working hard. Many Ascenders were out to kill all the monsters they could find roaming in Shiron. This was a daily task that had to be done in order to reassure that newly emerged monsters wouldn't stir any trouble.

By now Shiron was completely in Dilan's control and their group had taken in a few more Survivors, who had struggled to survive all by themselves, or in small groups.

Their numbers were constantly increasing and Dilan was currently considering how to get to the other cities to search and locate other groups and to rescue those, who were too weak to rescue themselves.

Dilan didn't do that solely for the sake of acting like their savior. He was not a hypocrite, who believed that he could play a hero. However, he still needed more humans because it was near-impossible for him and the others to overcome the struggle that awaited them if they were spread out and not working together.

Even if someone didn't want to work hard, they would receive an ability crystal just by killing a single monster. Despite having the capability to get their hands on more abilities, they were still rare.

Most good abilities in the Dungeon Shops were extremely expensive. The abilities one could receive with an extremely small change by exchanging Essence crystals at certain Gates were unlikely to be combat abilities as well. Most of them were either related to certain Lifestyle occupations or were focused on specific occupations.

Roughly every 10th trade at the Gate would reward one ability crystal, and only one in 50 ability crystals possessed a combat-focused ability.

Meanwhile, every third ability crystal generated by a Survivor, who killed a monster for the first time, was awarded a combat-focused ability crystal.

"We need to find more people...if there is only one or two with an Origin ability, it will be possible to create more powerhouses...just a few more, who are willing to give their all to become stronger and I won't have to feel so uneasy about the Vampire attack..." Dilan uttered quietly. Nobody heard him as he quietly traced his way back to the inside of the base.

"Why are you even that worried? It's not like you will die while fighting against the Vampires. At most some of your subordinates will die!" Victoria's voice floated towards him all of a sudden. He felt something soft and tender pressed on his upper arm and looked to his left.

Kathrine and Yvonne were running after Victoria, who had suddenly disappeared. They were wildly looking around for her and a deep frown appeared on their faces the moment they saw that Victoria was clinging to Dilan once again.

"Dilan, finally we found you!" Yvonne exclaimed, with a relieved expression on her face. He picked up the relief in her voice and turned in her direction.

"What's wrong?" He asked in an alarmed tone and waited for Yvonne to answer. However, she remained silent for a few seconds as she stared daggers at his arm that was tightly squeezed in between Victoria's ample breasts before she sighed deeply.

Taking a deep breath, she fanned herself with her hands in an effort to calm herself as she averted her focus to Dilan.

"You need to help me kill a few monsters. I want to level up my Origin ability," She said calmly and Dilan nodded his head almost immediately.

"Right, your [Angel of Death] needs to witness the death of powerful living beings to generate enough energy to level up. Will the Pagoda of Time work then?" Dilan asked and provided a feasible solution at the same time.

If they were to enter the Duo mode of the Pagoda of Time, they could kill a total of 1500 monsters or more while less than an hour passed in the outside world.

"That won't work. Monster kills inside the Pagoda of Time won't be considered and only Gold Tier-1 monsters or stronger count, either way!" Yvonne stated dejectedly as she approached Dilan and Victoria. She manifested a ball out of death mana to throw it at Victoria, who backed off instinctively.

“Why are you attacking me, Yve? Are you jealous~?” Victoria asked with a cheeky smile on her face. However, Yvonne could only frown deeply.

“This woman...” She muttered in annoyance, while Dilan turned to Kathrine.

“Kath, you need to help me as well!”

“Huh?...okay”

Chapter 310 New Ability

“Kath, can you help me upgrade [Thunder Step]? I need you to strike me with a Lightning around...20 times!” Dilan calculated and spoke with a bright smile on his face.

He kept walking through the base to reach the outside. There was something he wanted to take a look at in the alloy factory but he recalled the [Thunder Step] upgrade requirements when he heard Yvonne’s request.

“I also need Tier-1 Lightning Essence crystals. Maybe we can combine hunting strong beasts for Yvonne’s Origin ability with grinding for Tier-1 Lightning Essence crystals?” He proposed.

“I’m in!” Victoria shouted out in joy before jumping at Dilan, who stepped aside to avoid the naughty Vampire. Victoria pouted when she noticed that Dilan evaded her ‘attack’ but she didn’t fret about it for long. Her eyes were still marine blue and she could control her emotions, even if that was a bit regretful right now.

‘I will make you mine...hehe~’ She could only think before Victoria realized that another ball of death mana and a bolt of lightning shot toward her.

Dilan smiled when he noticed this but he averted his focus to the sister-duo to see what they would answer.

“I can help you. I need to kill a bunch of monsters with my [Compressed Lightning Strike] ability before I can even think about upgrading it, either way. My plan was to go out and help Yvonne with her Origin ability, but I think if we have a numerical advantage it would be easier to upgrade all of our abilities!” Kathrine said with a calm voice. Her expression resembled a poker face and only her fiery eyes that darted at Victoria revealed that Kathrine was giving her best to restrict herself and not explode.

Dilan was satisfied with that answer and he turned to Yvonne, who nodded her head as well. It was a bit annoying for them that Victoria was now an important member of their group and tail Dilan wherever he went but it was not as if it was impossible to control the Vampire.

Yvonne and Kathrine were slowly getting to know ways to control Victoria, which was much easier when Dilan was not around. After all, she was extremely similar to a normal human being as long as her psychotic ways were restricted.

“So we need to kill loads of powerful monsters and find a place where Tier-1 Lightning attributed monsters habituate. That won’t be easy,” Dilan mumbled as he thought about it. In the end, many semi-permanent Gates had appeared in and around Shiron during the last few days.

These semi-permanent Gates had been manifested way before the temporary Gates, ranging from three days up to an entire month. However, they were not comparable to permanent dungeons, and the isolated dimension behind them was quite interesting.

However, Dilan had yet to venture into any of the semi-permanent dungeons and his information about them was also restricted. He hadn't been able to update his knowledge until now.

"How about we take a look at the Bulletin Board of the Gates?" Kathrine suggested while shrugging her shoulders because she was also not sure which Gate would be best to enter.

The Bulletin Board of the Gates was located near the training grounds of the Ascenders and their small group of four approached it without hesitation.

When Dilan saw the Ascenders sparring with each other a faint smile emerged on his face. He liked the fact that everyone was trying hard to become stronger. The Ascenders were giving their best even during spars, which was something Dilan found to be extremely important. He looked at them like a proud father who was happy to see his kids trying hard to improve themselves.

However, his expression changed a bit when he looked at all the magnificent, elegant, and mighty abilities. All of them looked very complex and extremely powerful, even if the final result was not as exceptional as their awe-striking appearance suggested.

"I wonder what kind of ability I should bind to myself...Would it be intelligent to find an ability that decreases my health stat temporarily in exchange for a boost in another stat?...That should increase my combat prowess and it should help me to injure myself severely and fulfill the requirement to upgrade my Origin ability..." Dilan mumbled as he looked at the spectacular sight in front of him.

All kinds of unique abilities were unleashed thereby creating various effects. Dilan felt he was being a bit childish because he thought that it would be nice to have an impressive-looking ability to make a bigger impact when fighting with a numerical disadvantage.

He wanted to upgrade his Origin ability but that would be quite difficult considering that he could hardly injure himself even with the Thunderbolt Daggers. Dilan would have to pierce into one of the relatively soft spots on his body to actually inflict injuries upon himself, or use his entire strength to cut himself lightly.

That was why a new ability was necessary...

"My abilities are not really something to show off. I'm just plain powerful..." Dilan laughed out the longer he looked at the situation ahead.

"Is that a bad thing? Flowery abilities or the abilities that look extremely elegant, mighty or whatever are easy to look through," Victoria muttered out loud. She didn't think that it would be a problem if Dilan's abilities were 'simple', which was also why she added,

"If plain and simple is enough to kill your opponent, so be it!"

"I also think that plain and simple is fine. My [Compressed Lightning Strike] might look impressive but the short moment it needs to charge up is still a disadvantage. Your abilities don't require to be charged

up, or anything like that,” Kathrine declared, trying to console Dilan, even if she was not sure if that was necessary.

Dilan looked quite nonchalant when he spoke about the ‘trouble’ of him not owning a single ability to show off.

“I also saw that stats-switching abilities existed. I’m just not sure if that will help you, after all, it will be restricted to switching your Health stat with a single other stat. Using up one of your two remaining active ability slots for such a simple ability, where you cannot even freely decide which stat to increase or decrease is not of much use...in my opinion,” Yvonne shared her view that was different from the others and she didn’t shy away from revealing that.

“Alright, I will think about what to do...” Dilan hoped that he would figure it out in due time. He then averted his focus from both the training Ascenders and the Bulletin Board of the Gates.

He looked at two holographic screens where a list of the Taurus Shop and the sales appeared.

“Hmm...what am I going to choose...efficient, simple but a great combination if used with my other abilities....something I can use in the future as well, and something that helps me injure myself by lowering my Health temporarily...Does something like that even exist?” Dilan laughed out again but nobody paid any attention to him.

Even Victoria was able to tell that Dilan was a bit irked by the fact that his abilities didn’t improve as quickly as he wanted them to. He wanted to upgrade his Origin ability as quickly as possible to fight in the most-crowded area when the Vampires attacked.

Dilan didn’t want to be bothered about caring about his Health but he wanted to slaughter his opponents to make sure that he could protect those important to him. He felt that it was necessary for him to give his all in the fight against the Vampires and to make use of the opportunity, especially because he would need much longer than most others to advance to Tier-2.

Altogether, Dilan could tell that he would always need longer than others to advance...as long as he was in possession of the Cursed Blessing [Will of the Primordial].

It was a frustrating Cursed Blessing, and something he actually hated a lot because it did little to help him and paved more obstacles in his way to progress. What was the use of having a higher stat limit if he needed ten times longer to marginally improve his stats? Dilan’s stats would probably reach a base of 100 Units when others in his group had long since advanced to Tier-2.

By that time, his stats may not even be the highest anymore.

Dilan felt that this was even more frustrating than the attack of the Vampires because it would mean that the balance in his group would be destroyed. Maybe some would even question if Dilan was the right person to stay as a leader. This was not actually important for him because he could give up his position as a leader but the problem was that internal conflicts would happen either way.

“Oh...what is that?!” Dilan suddenly mumbled as his eyes brightened up.

“An ability like that exists?”